

ARGENTINA

U.S. Interests

Argentina is the second largest South American country in both area and population. It is strategically located, relatively advanced and exercises a leadership role in Hemispheric affairs. The U.S. is interested in:

- (1) positive and constructive relations with the Government of Argentina;
- (2) internal stability;
- (3) fair treatment of U.S. investment in Argentina, now estimated at \$1.4 billion;
- (4) cooperative relations between a range of U.S. and Argentine public and private institutions (including the military). Grant military training and FMS credits are programmed.

Human Rights Conditions in Argentina

The Argentine Constitution contains several provisions designed to assure respect for basic human rights. Nevertheless, acting under Article 23 of the Constitution, President Peron on November 6, 1974, decreed a State of Siege suspending all constitutional guarantees. The State of Siege continues in effect.

Over the past few years Argentina has been buffeted by an extraordinary degree of politically inspired violence. Argentine left-wing terrorist groups are the largest and best financed in the Hemisphere. They have perpetrated innumerable murders and kidnappings against government officials and businessmen, including several Americans. Eradication of these groups is a priority objective of the Argentine Government. Unfortunately, however, human rights violations have been committed in the course of carrying out the anti-terrorist struggles.

A. Hundreds of people have been arrested and held without charges under provisions of the State of Siege. According to an International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) report of June, 1975, these include a number of lawyers associated with the defense of arrested terrorists, but not otherwise accused of illegal activity.

B. There have been allegations that torture and maltreatment are used by security forces in their interrogation of persons arrested for terrorist activities. One American citizen claims to have been so tortured. The Argentine Government conducts investigations when there are allegations of torture, but these investigations generally prove inconclusive. The Argentine Government publicly condemns torture.

C. Hundreds of Argentine leftists have in the past year been abducted or have simply disappeared and later been found riddled with bullets. Several vigilante groups, in particular the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA), appear to operate in this fashion. Published reports in Buenos Aires indicate that senior Army officials and Congressmen from the ruling Peronist party have accused former Presidential adviser Jose Lopez Rega of masterminding the AAA. The Argentine Government, however, denies complicity in right-wing terrorist acts.

An ICJ effort to make a general study of the human rights situation in Argentina to supplement its June report concerning the status of certain defense lawyers has been impeded by the Argentine Government's refusal to allow the investigating team to enter the country.

U.S. Concern With Human Rights in Argentina

The Government of Argentina has been made fully aware of the importance the U.S. Government attaches to human rights. U.S. officials, both in Washington and Buenos Aires, have emphasized this subject in conversations with top-level Argentine officials.

We plan to continue making known our concern about human rights to senior Argentine officials. We believe that tying human rights concerns to our overall bilateral relationship in this way will be more effective and appropriate than would be the reduction or termination of security assistance. It is recommended that security assistance be programmed as proposed.